MEMORIES OF GENERAL ROBERT E. LEE

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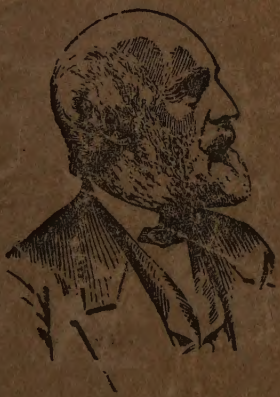

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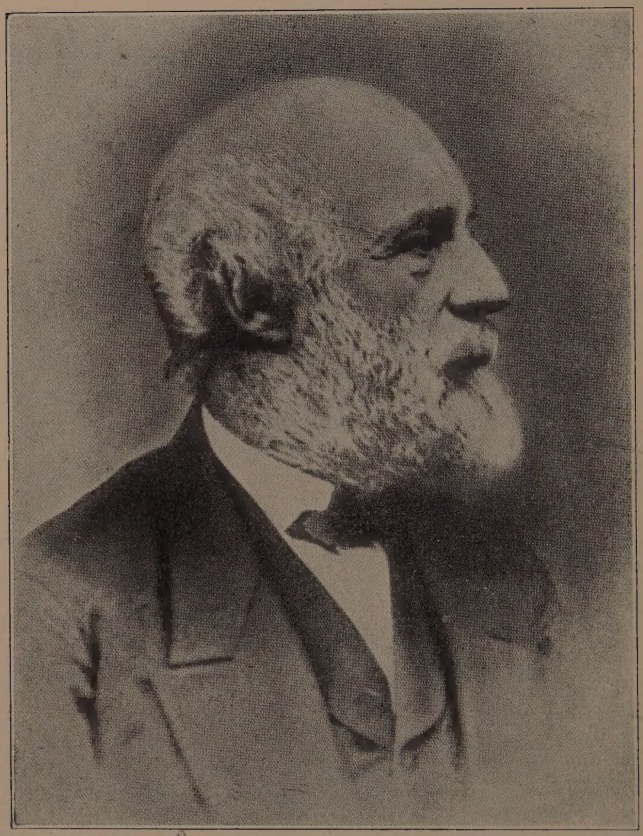
MEMORIES OF GENERAL LEE



GENERAL ROBERT E. LEE

From an unusual photograph, copies of which were presented by General Lee to his intimate friends.

WITHDRAWN

MEMORIES OF GENERAL ROBERT E. LEE

BY

Christiana Bond

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MEMORIES OF GENERAL LEE

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MEMORIES OF GENERAL ROBERT E. LEE

It was the summer of 1867. The Civil War had come to an end, but a glamor still hung over the South, and over her vanquished heroes.

We of the border land, children when the strife began, had woven our webs of youthful romance around its exciting events. We had lain on summer evenings Indian-wise, our ears to the ground, to feel the vibrations with which the earth shudderingly recorded the reports of cannon on far off battle fields. In awesome visions we had witnessed the horrors of the carnage.

We had listened with dilated eyes to stories of hairbreadth escapes; perchance we had carried trembling in our bosoms some secret which would have condemned brother or lover to the awful fate of

a spy, for the reckless volunteers dared frightful risks in their visits across the border line. Sometimes we had been delayed on our way to school by the ranks of ragged prisoners marching silently to the heavy beat of their own footfalls, and stealing furtive glances, it might be, at the faces of their own friends, or the doors of their own forsaken homes.

The pathetic romance of the Borderlands in the Civil War has never been fully written: the family divisions; the midnight flights of enthusiastic boys to join the Southern armies; the perils of the "underground route," the Secret Communications, in which women risked arrest and exile to aid their lovers or their kindred; the crossings of the Potomac on dark nights; the stolen visits; the hasty marriages; the untimely deaths—these were memories of our school days. The shadow of the war cloud had dimmed the brightness of our girlhood, and diminished the joyous

hopefulness with which buoyant maidenhood looks out on life. We had seen much of wreck and ruin and shattered illusions. Emotions had been too intense, interests too vital, hatreds too cruel, sorrows too keen. "The Sphynx of life stood pallid with her saddest secrets told."

We know now that war is not the tissue of romance and chivalry we thought it in the days when we sang, with closed windows and a delicious sense of lurking peril, the inspiring strains of "Maryland, My Maryland." To us today there is no sound so desperately sad, so fraught with the very life-breath of lost illusions as that now popular air to which the crowd listens so unconscious of the intensity, the throes of agonized excitement which it voiced in the days of long ago.

It was often observed that the women and the non-combatants were the irreconcilables when peace came. And surely that was inevitable; the duty of Christian for-

giveness did not seem so pressing when resentment was not for one's own sake, but for the sufferings and losses of others.

So it came that during the years of Reconstruction the women and girls of the Border States were proud of their loyalty toward the "Lost Cause," and were slow to accord social approval to those whom they classed collectively as "Yankees." The old wounds are long ago healed, the old indiscretions and irritations are the subjects of smile and jest. We know that the strife was the purifying and welding fire through which our country must needs pass before it could be consolidated into a great and enduring nation. We have lived to render ungrudging tribute to the loyalty and patriotism of the Blue and the Grey—but all that came slowly.

We were all young, and in the unabated vehemence of our sympathy with the defeated wearers of the Grey, when the Virginia

Springs opened their doors for the first time after the war.

It was the days of lumbering stage coaches and rough roads, but our ardor was too great, our anticipations too keen, to allow us to complain of the weariness of the way. Not only the legendary charms of the "Springs" before the war allured us, but the expectation of meeting men whom our enthusiasm invested with so many chivalric virtues. It is impossible for a girl of today to comprehend the romantic interest with which the heroes of the war were viewed by the girls of that time.

In some way unparalleled in history the bitterness of the Civil War has been eliminated from our memories, but we would not willingly forget the generous enthusiasms which lifted life above its sordid or trivial ideals. Many whose girlhood began in luxury before the war are earning their scanty bread in poverty and struggle; but they

look back on the strenuous years of their life in the sixties and are glad that they have lived history, and known some of the noblest and the most intense experiences life can give.

And so as we found ourselves in Virginia, passing over roads made historic by the march of armies, and in sight of battle fields whose names were full of bloody memories, we were keyed up to a high pitch of excited anticipation.

But the July sun was hot, and the jolting stage journey was wearisome. We had slept at Covington. famous then, as before the war, for its dinner of chicken and fried mush, generously covered with savory cream gravy. The next morning we continued our journey and by noonday reached a roadside tavern, the appointed place for midday rest.

Descending from our perches on top of the great, unwieldy coach, hot, dusty and eager for a refresh-

ing basin of cold water, we encountered the announcement that the rooms were all engaged. Virginians, traveling in their own carriages as in days before the war, were on the way to their long deserted cottages at the Springs and, better informed as to the necessities of the journey, had engaged accommodations on the route. The elders of our party resigned themselves to their fate, and accepted fans and rocking chairs in the darkened parlors gay with "antimacassars." We were, however, too young for resignation and too excited for repose, and we wandered over the long "porches" and wide halls bemoaning our lot, and striving to move the pity of the respectable colored attendants.

But the portly "Mammy" who presided over the rooms was as resolute in her caressing tones and deferential manners as the boldest hotel clerk of modern times with his curt monosyllables.

"Honey, sure I is sorry, I don't like to see you young ladies put out; your Mammy likes for all real quality folks to have the best of ebery-thin' the way I done 'tend to my young ladies 'fore de war, but I just dassen't let nobody come into them rooms nohow. Why, Gen'l Robert Lee hisself done tell me keep them rooms safe tell his Mistis come. He rode 'long fust on old Traveler, he did. He's a grand gemmen, he is. I seed him here ebery summer 'fore de war. Oh, laws, how the quality used to come a-ridin' and a-drivin' here in them days. My old Master, he was killed dead in the Wilderness, and de house all bu'nt to de groun', an' old Mistis, she got away to Richmon', and' she died, an' all my folks is scattered. Oh, honey, we'll never see de old times again. You come along in here, now, and your Mammy, she'll get you some nice cold water to drink, and dinner'll soon be ready, sure!"

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Suddenly, as the old colored woman talked on in her persuasive tones, we were aware of some one standing at the turn of the steep stairway above us. Looking up, at the sound of a rich, beautifully modulated voice, we knew that we were in the presence of General Robert E. Lee, the hero of our dreams. No man has been better represented by photography, so his noble countenance needs not to be described.

The man who stood before us, the embodiment of a Lost Cause, was the realized King Arthur. The soul that looked out of his eyes was as honest and fearless as when it first looked on life. One saw the character, as clear as crystal, without complications or seals, and the heart, as tender as that of ideal womanhood. The years which have passed since that time have dimmed many enthusiasms and destroyed many illusions, but have caused no blush at the memory of the swift thrill of recognition and reverence

which ran like an electric flash through one's whole body.

General Lee stood above us on the stairway, clad in Confederate grey, his wide, soft hat in his hand, which still wore his riding gauntlet. He looked very tall and majestic as he stood there, beaming down upon us with his kindly, humorous smile and the wonderful beauty of his dark eyes. When we recovered our wits we found a courteous invitation was being extended to refresh ourselves in the rooms which had been reserved for Mrs. Lee's party. We were reluctant, and somewhat ashamed of our petulancy which we feared had been overheard; but there was no resisting the firm, gentle insistency of the General, and we were soon removing the traces of travel in the rooms which had been so kindly relinquished.

Next day we were established in our simple cottage at the White Sulphur Springs, and weeks of rap-

General Lee's Cottage in Baltimore Row—Sketch Book, July, 1867

turous enjoyment stretched their length before us.

Our cottage was in the "Baltimore Row," a neat, whitewashed structure with a vine-clad veranda along the front and, between us and the wide, columned hotel, a stretch of lawn shaded by great trees. The "North Carolina row," with yellow-washed walls and high porches supported by pillars, was on our right. Close by was General Lee's cottage, on the veranda of which stood the invalid chair of his wife. Our chance encounter on the journey was the beginning of a delightful intercourse, both at the "White" and at the "Old Sweet," to which, according to custom, we later moved.

"Traveler," the old war horse, proudly bearing the upright form of his master, became a frequent sight. There was a daily morning ride, usually alone, and in the afternoon excursions, on which the General frequently joined his young

friends. It was a beautiful life at the "White" in those old days. Much of the charm of the kindly, simple customs of the ante bellum days still lingered, before the great chasm opened and swallowed up so much that had remained of colonial simplicity, hospitality and dignified courtesy.

Experience in other lands, and in some of the famous resorts of our own country, has given nothing that can be compared with the joyousness, the kindliness and the naive freedom which existed amid so much refinement and dignity in the social life of the summer. Regard for others, attentions to little amenities, remembrance of the stranger, respect for the aged, were rules of life.

It was General Lee who was the embodiment of the distinctive beauty in the social atmosphere. Day by day, as he lived amongst us, his influence impressed itself deeply. We saw his carriage erect and

noble, his face grave, gentle, resolute and tender, his manner dignified, modest, unobtrusively courteous; we saw, moreover, his absolute loyalty to the allegiance he had sworn when he laid down his arms. His whole soul was engaged in the work of reconstruction, and he lost no opportunity to promote it socially.

The old habitues stood somewhat in the relation of hosts to the company, and strangers were wont to be cordially received and soon introduced from one party to another; a few days usually sufficed to make the newcomers part of the great social family.

Naturally the Marylanders had some link of friendship or kindred with the Virginians, and, once recognized, social amalgamation was complete. In truth, Society was not too large in those days for some identifying thread to connect all who had a natural right to know each other, hence people were not

afraid to make acquaintances at summer resorts. When the orchestra wooed to the dance they did not sit in formal rows around the walls, gazing with polite indifference at the two or three lonely couples who glided over the polished floors.

There was one custom peculiar to the "White" and surviving long after the war. The long "parlor" was the gathering place of the company after a meal. Here every one took part in a promenade up and down the great uncarpeted space, not usually in couples but in lines of three or four. Here introductions took place, here engagements were made, and this was the stranger's opportunity to be absorbed into the strenuous stream of life. It was only the old or the feeble who sat along the walls, unless a rare ostracism left the objectionable stranger stranded on the shore.

Groups of young men, the newcomers, gathered about the doors

to await fortunate opportunities, and were soon joined to some one of the constantly changing lines. It was a gay, informal scene, bewildering to the lookers-on. There was a graceful rhythm in the motion, as groups and couples threaded the winding maze, and there was harmony of sound in the mingling of tuneful Southern voices.

The influence of General Lee was always present in these promenades. It was his time to dispense the kindly courtesies which made him the presiding genius of the place. He loved young people, especially young girls, for, to confess the truth, the young men were not thoroughly at ease with him; he seemed to test them with an Ithuriel spear, and they were inclined to shrink from the lofty standard he maintained. But he loved to see the girls surrounded by cavaliers and merry in the dance, and many a young Southerner owed his acquaintance with the belle of the season to General Lee's stately pre-

sentation. The keen, kindly eye was always alert lest some one should fail to share in the general happiness. This quiet influence, subtle and unacknowledged, permeated the throng and welded it into a gracious community regardful of mutual needs and pleasures.

Instinctively we of the younger company were conscious of a standard held before us on which truth and a regard for one's neighbor were inscribed as social duties, and learned a code by which the ballroom became a place for the practice of the highest Christian virtues.

The great dining room was transformed into a ballroom after the evening meal, and the negro waiters formed an inspiring orchestra. From the promenade in the long parlor the company paraded the great length of the piazza, and assembled for the dance in the dining hall. Every evening General Lee marshalled a merry group of girls, and sat in the midst while

partners came and went. Apparently he felt among the maidens a safety from intrusion which he could not have among those to whom his personality, and the great issues which he represented, were uppermost thoughts. He avoided all conversation on the war and its outcome.

Among the young people he was the kind friend, the indulgent yet watchful guardian, whose encouraging smile or approving glance was an inspiration. He loved to see them taking part in their natural pleasures, but he guarded from urgency or ridicule the scrupulous one who looked wistfully on. For in those days there were not a few whose family training debarred them from the fun, or who joined only in the Lancers or the Virginia Reel, and wondered whether "round" dances could really be so wrong. To all these, as to the gayer members of the group, the storm-tried veteran was the sympathetic monitor and the considerate friend.

He was the interested observer, too, of many incipient love affairs. He had the Southerner's deference for woman, and the Southerner's respect for her right of flirtation. It was a man's privilege to "court" and the woman's right to "discard" —old-fashioned words now, but common enough in those more chivalric days.

Many are the incidents of those weeks which arise to the memory, recalling some trait of the old soldier's noble character. To the intercourse of social life he brought the conscientious performance of duty which characterized him in the greatest affairs.

Among the guests were a few families from the North, families for the most part of military men who had made acquaintance with the "Baths" during their campaigns in Virginia, or who had spent pleasant summers there before the war and hoped to renew old associations. The majority of

the company were Southerners and few of the men were without titles which, in our eyes, added to their attractiveness. "General," "Colonel," "Major," "Captain" and "Judge" were the universal forms of address. They had come back across the gulf of war to take up life in their old cottages and try to fancy that the war had not swept away all the old past. Some of them were sad, broken-looking men, and some wore a resolute air of courage and conquest.

Sometimes you noted the emptiness of a sleeve, or the absence of a leg, but the young men were just as eager for flirtation or serious courtship under the old oak trees as their fathers had been in the former days, when they waited upon the fair with somewhat more of grace and old-world chivalry.

The burly form of General Fitzhugh Lee was the center of many a merry group. The jesting manner of the cavalry officer, dashing,

brave and debonair, was a contrast to the grave, self-restrained courtesy and low musical voice of his uncle, General Robert, or his cousin, General Custis Lee. None of us divined then that the united country would mourn for the death of General Fitzhugh Lee, as for one who had, more than any other, fulfilled the desire for healing and reunion nearest to the heart of the old hero.

Thoughtful as General Lee was for the happiness of every one, he was doubly solicitous for the small contingent of Northerners. Those among them who had been officers in the Union Army apparently avoided social intercourse with him, perhaps from consideration for his probable shrinking from contact with his conquerors. He, on the contrary, was concerned only for their enjoyment and for the Southern reputation for hospitality, and was uneasy at their comparative isolation, which offended his sense of Southern cordiality. By quiet

attentions to the ladies of their parties he drew them into his own circle, and thus strove to break down the intangible barriers of separation. Truth to tell, his task was not always easy.

One evening, before the dance began, a group of recent arrivals sat somewhat apart, with the air of mere lookers-on. They were from a Northern State and the name was one celebrated in the annals of the war. General Lee inquired of his young following whether they had welcomed the strangers. No one had made their acquaintance. The grave suggestions of our leader met evasive answers. The reminder that we were on our own soil and owed a sacred duty of hospitality fell on reluctant ears. In truth, the manner of the Northern group was not inviting of courtesy.

"I have tried in vain," said the General, finally, "to find any lady who has made acquaintance with the party, and is able to present

me. I shall now introduce myself, and shall be glad to present any of you who will accompany me."

Was it shyness which deterred them from crossing the great ballroom? Or was it a bit of girlish wilfullness? Certain it is that only one of the group, and that one the least brave, complied with the request. "I will go, General Lee, under your orders," I said, and proudly arose to accompany him.

Never could I forget the moments which followed.

"Not under my orders," he gently corrected, "but it will gratify me deeply to have your assistance."

And so we crossed the great room, but under the brilliant crystal chandelier he paused, and spoke words which went to the soul of his young hearer. He told of the grief with which he found a spirit of unreasoning resentment and bitterness in the young people of the South, of the sinfulness of hatred and social revenge, of the duty of kind-

ness, helpfulness and consideration for others.

In a rush of unwonted feeling the impulsive question came: "But, General Lee, did you never feel resentment towards the North?" ("Yankees" one might not say in his presence).

Standing in the radiance of the myriad lighted crystals, his face took on a far-away, almost inspired look, as his hand involuntarily sought his breast. He spoke in low, earnest tones: "I believe I may say, looking into my own heart, and speaking as in the presence of God, that I have never known one moment of bitterness or resentment." After a pause he added, "When you go home, I want you to take a message to your young friends. Tell them from me that it is unworthy of them as women, and especially as Christian women, to cherish feelings of resentment against the North. Tell them that it grieves me inexpressibly to know that such

a state of things exists, and that I implore them to do their part to heal our country's wounds."

More he said, but memory centers itself upon that supreme moment when the heart of the valiant soldier was revealed, a heart in which love was enshrined with duty, and loyalty to God with charity towards all mankind.

We crossed the room at last and joined the formidable group. The old soldier courteously presented himself and his young companion and accepted the proffered seats. The invisible restraint which had existed in social intercourse between the representatives of different sections still remained, but the example and influence of the illustrious leader modified its expression and led to exchange of courtesies.

There was another instance of watchful kindness which taught as deep a lesson. During the daily promenade in the long parlor, two

young girls in deep mourning sat apart; apparently they knew no one. General Lee was uneasy; he passed among the circle of his girl friends inquiring who the two solitary ones were, but no one knew or cared. The little that was known no one was brave enough to repeat; the girls had arrived under the care of an uncle, whose name was identical with that of a prominent tailoring firm in a Southern city. They were refined in appearance, ladylike and retiring, but not in "Society." No one had made advances to them.

"Since no one can present me," the General said, "I must venture to introduce myself. I can not see them left alone."

Crossing the room with his dignified step, he bowed before the girls, introduced himself simply, as an old resident who felt his duty towards strangers, and accepted a seat on the sofa between the delighted girls, who had been admir-

ing him from afar. No day passed after this, during their stay at the White Sulphur, without the same distinction from General Lee.

In his genial sympathy with the social pleasures of the young people it disturbed General Lee that his son, General Custis Lee, held himself aloof. He had playfully promised him as a cavalier to the youngest of his favorites, but day after day General Custis failed to appear. At last his promise was gained, and in the promenade in the long parlor he was introduced.

Immediately he fell into his father's plan, and stood in constant attendance by the young girl's chair, usually silent and erect as if on guard. One morning when he had stood a long time beside the group of girls I said, "General Custis, why do you not sit down?" Gravely he answered, with a touch of his father's humor, "I am a modest man, and for a modest man to have his hands and his feet on his mind

at the same time is too much; when I stand my feet are off my mind and I have only my hands to attend to."

General Custis Lee shared his father's characteristics, and there was humor in his kindness, too. One day there came a plain girl with an unassuming chaperon. They were not at home in the circle in which they found themselves, and the young lady was not of the material of which a belle is usually made. I remember yet her freckles and her dumpy little figure. But it chanced that during the war her father had done kindly service to Southern prisoners, some of whom had belonged to General Custis Lee's command. The word went forth that the girl should know the rapture of being *a belle.* General Custis took the matter in hand—the old soldiers were loyal and grateful. They thronged around her. How she danced and walked and flirted! What famous men contended for the honor of her hand!

How she was encircled by a brilliant group, all bent upon doing her honor! No doubt her children proudly cherish yet the memory of the time when their quiet, plain little mother was the belle of the White! If we who were in the secret smiled, it was a sympathetic smile, for we recognized the true chivalry and gratitude which lay beneath the little comedy. And with what a beaming smile our chief looked on!

"Let us go," he said, when his hour for retiring came, "I know my son Custis; he will never fail in his duty. We may return tomorrow and find him still promenading here."

The North and South have long since become friends. Those who are young now have no comprehension of the intensity of feeling which burnt in the souls of their parents when they, too, were young. That the reconciliation came so soon was owing largely to the un-

White Sulphur Springs—Sketch Book, July, 1867

tiring efforts of General Robert E. Lee and others with like greatness of soul. With the same devotion with which he accepted the duty of leading the armies of the South, when his State called him, renouncing in agony of struggle the proffered command of the Federal army, so did he now give himself unreservedly to the work of reconstruction, when the strife was ended.

One evening, after one of his occasional exhortations to his own especial group of young friends, a girl, with an unprecedented burst of flippancy, exclaimed, "Well, General Lee, they say General Grant is coming here next week; what will you do then?"

Some of us would gladly have slain her on the spot, but she evidently failed to comprehend the covert stab of her thoughtless words.

The earnest, far-away look came into the beloved leader's eyes, and

his face assumed a nobler, gentler cast, as he said, "If General Grant comes I shall welcome him to my home, show him all the courtesy which is due from one gentleman to another, and try to do everything in my power to make his stay here agreeable."

General Grant did not come, and we missed a sight for men and angels, which that little trellised piazza would have daily given us.

As the summer weeks wore on amidst the simple gaieties and informal intercourses of the Springs, we learned still more to love and reverence the man whose personality typified all that was best of the old regime of the South. Many instances of his watchful care, his true kindliness, are treasured in the memories of those who saw him day by day. One story must suffice.

Behind the hotel rose a mountain which few people were energetic enough to climb. The long warm

mornings were rather passed under the oak trees or in the bowling alley, or in some romantic nook sacred to lovers. An early ride on horseback, or a late afternoon drive, sufficed for exercise. A walk to the summit was often planned by our party, and as often abandoned. But two of us determined to climb the steep path alone. Part of the ascent lay through a very deep wood and the road was seldom traveled. It was here, in the loneliest part, that we heard behind us the sound of horses' hoofs and saw the well known form of Traveller, the grey war horse. His rider dismounted and stood bareheaded beside us.

"I overheard you this morning," he said, "planning to climb the mountain, and I could not suffer you to go unattended. With your permission I will accompany you."

Throwing the stirrup across the military saddle, he courteously urged the elder lady to mount the horse, and when we both declined,

he walked beside him, beguiling the way with kindly talk. Not until we had viewed the landscape from the summit and had come again within sight of the Hotel, did Traveller resume his burden and trot off on his daily course.

Space fails to tell of the constant evidences of the nobility and tenderness of the great soldier. We could readily believe the story told by one of his officers, that in the heat of an attack he crossed the bullet-swept yard to return to its nest a bird that had fallen to the ground. All kindly acts seemed fitting to him, and his tenderness expressed itself towards animals as towards human beings.

There was an atmosphere of patriarchal government about the place that summer which gave to old men and women a prestige now unknown. One of the special favorites of the young people was the venerable philanthropist, Mr. Corcoran, of Washington. She was a

proud little maiden whose winning wiles secured him one evening as her partner for the Lancers. The company looked on delightedly as the venerable face of the octogenarian shone with fun and kindly pleasure. Enthusiastic clapping of hands greeted him as he led his young partner to her seat, utterly unconscious that he was the subject of applause. None of the spectators entered more heartily into the scene than the fringe of black waiters about the doors.

One morning we missed the beat of Traveller's hoofs beneath the windows, and were not unprepared for the announcement that met us at breakfast that General Lee had been taken seriously ill during the night. For the brief remainder of our stay we were as demoralized as any army without a commander.

The next summer I was at Lexington, Virginia. The lumbering stage coach deposited us, bruised and weary, just before dawn on a

June morning. An interminable night of misery had passed while we were jolted over the mountain roads. It was gravely said that the journey was always made at night because the traveller would not face the perils of the way should daylight reveal them to him.

Very lovely was the freshness and fragrance that hung about the old gardens of Lexington as we drove through the town in the dewy freshness of the dawn. Not many hours later we came down-stairs with a wondering sense of elation, to receive a call from General Robert E. Lee, the President of Washington University. To him the act of courtesy was natural.

In Lexington we saw General Lee in the daily round of duty, and saw him still as simple and as great. Every morning his stately form went by to the early service in the Chapel, and there were few students who cared to disregard his example. As he obeyed the call of

his State when she bade him lead her armies, so he obeyed her call to lead her boys out of the depression and demoralization of defeat into a noble, hopeful manhood and a loyal fulfillment of their obligations to God and their country. His influence spoke courage and the inspiration of duty. He knew no North and no South, but with unswerving purpose sought to heal the divisions of Civil War. It was in his own town we heard and could well believe a characteristic story. A needy tramp came one day to his house and roused his ready sympathy. The General went back and forth, fitting him out with garments from his own store. As he passed his wife's invalid chair, carrying the grey overcoat which had sheltered him in many a bivouac, she asked who the man was. "An old soldier," was the evasive answer. "Of whose command?" "Of General Sherman's," came the rather reluctant reply. To those who valued the memories which that coat

possessed, the gift may well have seemed lavish.

As a guest at General Pendleton's I was often informally in General Lee's home and at his table. Every one here knows the beautiful life of that home: General Lee's devotion as a husband and father, Mrs. Lee's charm of refinement and culture. Everyone knows, too, of the unswerving purpose of General Lee to gather up the fragments of the shattered South.

"I have led her young men to battle and often to death; it is my duty to lead them now to a nobler life for their country," he once said. As President of Washington and Lee University the fulfillment of his purpose was accomplished. His firm step as he passed the old, fragrant Lexington gardens each morning, on the way to the college Chapel, was a silent declaration of his aim.

There was one memorable day when, in Mrs. Lee's room, her in-

valid chair was drawn up to a table on which were letters and miniatures of the Washington family, which Mrs. Lee had inherited through her father, George Washington Parke Custis. She was looking at them, faded and discolored, with distress. Buried in the earth during the war, they had been recently restored to her, but moulded and almost effaced. She was beginning the almost impossible work of restoration.

Adjoining hers was the little room where stood General Lee's camp bed and a single chair. Two battered trunks were open in it now for the first time since the war; General Lee was examining their contents. Frequently he came to Mrs. Lee's side, showing her some article and recounting its history. There were many tributes of admiration and love, and mementoes of battle and siege. Once he held up, with his tender, humorous smile, a rich saddle cloth embroidered with the words "To our Deliverer."

"They thought I would ride through the city with that on my horse," he said. One little relic came to my share. It was a velvet watch case, embroidered with tarnished gold. "It was under my pillow every night during the war when I *had* a pillow," he said, "let it now be under yours."

In one corner of his little, bare, whitewashed room there was a brilliant spot where stood a group of swords in ornamental sheaths. Two were General Washington's, presented by the Republic; one the sword of his father, General Light Horse Harry; the fourth he held patiently and silently, as slowly he deciphered the inscription of the presentation to himself of the Sword of the Confederacy.

Another sword, with a French inscription, General Lee held before us almost reluctantly, and the gravity of his manner forbade any questions. I believe now that it was the sword which he wore at the sur-

render and which he did *not* offer to General Grant.

Strange as it seems to us now—Lexington the seat of the Washington and Lee University and of the Military Institute could only be approached by a night journey either by stage coach or by canal boat. Remembering the horrors of the journey by stage over roads of unspeakable roughness, I gladly undertook the return journey by canal boat to Lynchburg, under the escort of General Custis Lee. Nothing could have been more delightful than the novelty of gliding in the sunset and the moonlight through the lovely Virginia scenery. But the scene when at a late hour we went below, was a shock. The floor of the boat was literally covered with the bodies of sleeping men, and it was necessary to leap over them one by one through the length of the cabin, to arrive at the curtained space assigned to the women passengers. A sliding panel the length of the berth permitted one to rest with head and

shoulders outside and thus endure what otherwise would have been an intolerable night. The sight of an occasional deer with her fawns coming down to drink in the gleaming water of the James River and the beauty of the wooded banks beguiled the tedium of the sleepless night.

In the moonlight we had hours of talk on the deck, in the midst of which I said, "Is it true that your father would never use the word 'Yankee,' but said 'Charge those people?'" "Yes," he said, "it is true; but," he added, "I did not share his feelings."

Again in answer to my rather inane question, "Why did the South so suddenly give up?" General Custis said, "I can only answer for my command; for four days we had had nothing to eat but the corn the men carried in their pockets." General Custis Lee had none of his father's acceptance of the South's defeat and the wrecking of all his

hopes. He seemed broken and disheartened, perhaps because life was still before him; while with General Robert E. Lee there was the resignation of a Christian and the calm consciousness of fulfilled duty as a soldier and a patriot.

The farewell moments with General Robert E. Lee are a sacred memory. A girl friend whom General Lee had invited to visit his home that summer had sent a message of regret and the hope that she might come the next summer. "Tell her," he said gravely, "that she should have come now, next summer will be too late, I shall not be here." And then, following my startled remonstrance, came the words, "My child, I think I am the very oldest man you have ever seen."

I understood, for the words of the poet swept across my memory, and I murmured,

"We live by deeds, not words,
By thoughts and not by shadows on the dial,
We should count time by heart throbs."

When the next summer had passed, General Lee's words were fulfilled. He had "crossed the bar and seen his Pilot, face to face."

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